MERLIN

A Dramatic Poem

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M E R L I N

A DRAMATIC POEM

Meruelous Merling is wasted away
With a wicked woman, woe might shee be,
For shee hath closed him in a craige
On Cornwel coast.

—*Old Scots Song.*

M E R L I N

A DRAMATIC POEM

BY

RALPH MACLEOD FULLARTON

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
MDCCCXC

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DEDICATORY.

WHEN life so noble is so near,
Who would have heart to roam?
O mother and O sister dear,
Your love is heaven and home.

Take the old tragic story, where
Deep meaning darkly shines;
For you a light divinely fair
Illumines all the lines,—

The light as of a lucent soul
In bliss. O heavenly dove!
Her eyes are stars, and gild the whole
Dark agony of love;

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Yet haply through a tear have gazed,
Knowing it but a part
Of the great mystery that hath raised
And broken many a heart;

Hath raised and broke, shall raise and break
Full many a heart again,
Until the Son of Man shall make
Anew the sons of men;

Till from the thorny death-dewed brow
A god shall lift the pall,
And love, that is the victim now,
Shall be the lord of all.

PROLOGUE

MERLIN AT HOME

A Wooded Valley opening on the Sea.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS (*unseen*).

THE god of light with radiant fingers
Bends o'er the earth an azure blaze ;
She, warmly wooed, no longer lingers,
But gives her beauty to his gaze.
His smile illumes her secret fountains.
In forests olden glads the gloom,
Rolls the light mist from off the mountains,
And robes the valley-slopes in bloom.

From hill and plain, from rock and river,
An universal shout goes up
Loud antheming the glorious Giver,
Who crowneth every creature's cup.

The stainless height of heaven rejoices,
The winds shake music from their wings,
And ocean with ten thousand voices
His thunder-psalm majestic sings.

The sun, with vast reverberations
Amid his shining choir above,
Awakes with magical vibrations
All earth to bloom, all souls to love.
Night falls; a planetary splendour
Deepens the deep mysterious sky;
With expectation dread yet tender
The sons of God look up on high.

MERLIN (*entering*).

Alone with nature I breathe again.
This quiet wood, that shining sea,
With sweet allurement beckon me
Out from the noisy ways of men;
And Nature with her thousand voices
Calls; at her call my heart rejoices.

O mighty Mother, let me see
The inly soul of all things fair,
That burst in blossom, and melt in air,
And haunt the deep heart of the sea.
Come, blessèd creatures, at the call
Of him who loves you one and all.
No weird compelling wand have I,
But love, mere love. On you I'll try
The power of love and poesy.
See in my song your beauty set;
For love must give, if love would get.

(*Sings.*)

Heart of mine, out with thee into the day,
Spread thee through nature anear and afar,
Bloom with the flower, with the cloud float away,
Mingle with earth and air, sea, sky, and star.

Leap with the cataract into the vale,
Hang on the rainbow's rim over the fall,
Spread with the sea-gull a feathery sail,
Break with the breakers when loud winds call.

Weave with the moonlight a shadowy dream,
Dance with the ripple, and sleep with the pool,
With the wave wander in gloom and in gleam,
Full be with life, heart, with all life be full.

Art thou a wanderer, wind of the West?
Know'st thou the heart of the wide wild sea?
I too a rover am, bold as the best,
Nature's wide wild heart is open to me.

(*The Spirits appear on all sides.*)

Trooping they come in order fair
Out of ocean, earth, and air.

THE SPIRITS.

To thee we come, O man, the singer,
Of deeper music the mighty bringer,
For on our ear thy song did fall,
And stirred us like a trumpet-call,
As when of old great Orpheus led
The dance of things that men call dead.

MERLIN.

Happy creatures, tell me whence
Ye come to charm my ravished sense.

THE SPIRITS OF THE AIR (*circle and sing*).

In the great ocean that ebbs and flows not,
But breathes in zephyr and breaks in storm,
We fleet, fair phantoms the dull eye knows not,
And play i' the clouds' ever-shifting form.
The winds they weave for us late and early
Of rainbow colours a garment rare,
With woof of sunbeam and weft of pearly
Diaphanous air.
Blue, deep blue in the vaulted ether,
Silver-blue in the moonlit night,
Red, rose-red where the sky beneath her
Beholds the birth and the death of light,
Gold and purple and green where the great sea
Draws o'er the sunk sun her garment's hem;
All tender hues of air melt into us, and we
Melt into them.

The Spirits of the Water (*circle and sing*).

By the clear cool bubbling of wells in the heart of
the hills,
Where white down the shadowy dells fall the waver-
ing rills,
Where cold on the water wan pale moonbeams play,
Go alone, you will see her anon—the sweet water-fay.
And she hath a sister, who lies in the ocean-caves
Rocked on the fall and rise of the great green waves,
Or runs with the ridge that darkles and breaks into
spray,
A shower of diamond sparkles and dies away.

Her lips are coral, her grave sweet eyes are blue,
But her cheek is wan as a wave that the light shines
through;
Goldy green is the shine of her floating hair,
And white as foam on the brine is her bosom bare,
And calm with the calm of ocean her perfect breast
Heaves with a restful motion that may not rest.
O never again may the man rest by night or day

Who hath kissed the wild eyes of the wan sweet
water-fay.

THE SPIRITS OF THE EARTH (*circle and sing*).

SEMI-CHORUS I., DRYADS.

Where in the dim wood 'mid shadows olden
Flits and flickers the wavering light,
Whether through green leaves the sun falls golden
By day, or the moon falls silver by night,
All in a kirtle green,
And a wild rose in her hair,
Flitteth through shade and sheen
The wood-nymph rare.

Pure her cheek as a wild rose pale,
And her dark eyes are the violet-blue
O' the sky when the light has begun to fail
And sweet and sudden a star peeps through.
And over her kirtle green,
And down to her ankles bare,
Flits and flickers the sheen
Of her golden hair.

Semi-Chorus II., Oreads.

Through the solemn silence of the glen,
Up the steep slopes of the mighty ben,
Where around his craggy shoulders bare
Purple robe of heather he doth wear,
Higher yet, higher,
Mortal, aspire,
If thou would see
The goddess fair and free,
The spirit of the hills whose train are we.

Where the topmost peak his forehead bare
Lifts into the clear immaculate air,
Where the cloud her fleecy fold hath laid
O'er the scars the thunderbolt hath made,
There on the edge
Of earth's utmost ledge,
Heaven in her air,
The goddess standeth bare,
While the winds lift her long loose-floating hair.

MERLIN.

Children of the Mighty Mother,
Of you all I am the brother.
All your elements to me
Are a dear necessity.
Looking on your ordered beauty
The soul wakes to love and duty,
And in deep prophetic dreams
Sees what is, behind what seems.

THE SPIRITS.

We are of the wind, the tide,
The season, and with them we glide,
And gliding with us all things seem
A vague sweet unpurposed dream.
Yet within our narrower scope
We have yearning, we have hope,
Blind fore-feelings that do lie
Deeper than the seeing eye,

And to us too 'tis a woe
To see, to wonder, and not to know.
But to thee belongs, O man,
In the maze to find a plan.
Listening thy sweet singing we
For the first time seem to see
In all Nature unity.
All her shifting shows remain
Links in a mysterious chain.
Say, for thou art in touch with the whole,
What is of all things the secret soul?

MERLIN.

Love, only love.

THE SPIRITS.

Love! What is he?
Whence? and where may his kingdom be?

MERLIN.

Love, though veiled, is lord of all,
Or in ocean, earth, or air,

Or the dim-lit starry space;
Secret, silent, everywhere
Showing his finger, hiding his face.
Round the fiery central ball,
Where, to rhythmic motions bound,
Through the vast light-haunted ether
Planets roll in mazy round,
Separate however far,
O'er the gulf that doth enwreathe her
Star doth yet reach after star.
While in other orbits wheeling,
An unconscious attractive grace
Links them leaning gently, feeling
Each the other o'er endless space.
And of earth, our kindly mother,
Every atom owns a brother.
Not a grain in all her dust
Clasps another because it must,
But an inner elective force
Shapes for either a common course,
And a motion, akin to will
In a blind impulsive mood,

Prompteth each to repel the ill,
Guideth each to the kindred good.
Each tiny life on the teeming earth
In loving union had his birth,
For all is barren where love is not.
His vital beauty-breathing power
Clothes hill and valley with herb and flower,
Sweeter the lonelier the spot.
With Philomel he wooes the dark,
Wooes the dawn with thy song, sweet lark,
Warms the wan wave's silent brood,
Quickens earth, air, ocean-flood.
Love, informer of every form,
Yet owns o'er man a diviner sway.
Sweetly thrilling, kindly warm,
Where the bounding pulses play,
Sits i' the silence of the breast
Love, confest or unconfest,
On the heart as on a throne
Autocrat. Nor there alone.
Spirit-like, love hath the art
To be all in every part;

Pledge in all and prophecy
Of the better yet to be.
Love hath in the lordly dome
Of thought a palace and a home;
There, or waking we or sleeping,
His phantastic revels keeping
Through the chambers of the brain
'Mid a bright immortal train
Fashioned more divinely fair
Than to breathe earth's lower air;
They to fancy do belong
And the old domain of song.
Love looks from the lattice high
Of the clear lash-curtained eye;
Straightway 'tis a magic mirrour.
Highest truth, divinest errour,
Forms ideal, unborn being,
Glass them there for love's sole seeing.
Common things by common light
Glow transfigured in his sight;
Might they be? Ah if they might!
'Tis the *might be* in the being

Love sees with a precious seeing.
Saddest memories, sweetest fancies,
Are the back and forward glances
Of his soul that sweeps the scene
From *may be* to *might have been.*
The faint fragrance of a rose
Ere the blushing leaves unclose
Love keeps when the petals gay
Long years gone are fled away.
Lightest whisper love will hear,
Heard not but by lover's ear,
And draw from cold or kindly tone
All pain, all pleasure. Love alone
Leaps from passion-parted lips
A wingèd joy, a soul-like sound ;
And with a mighty thrill is found
In touch of tender finger-tips ;
Waiting in a sweet suspense
At the gateways of the sense,
Wistful windows whence the soul
Sees the part and dreams the whole.
And at those visionary gates

'Twixt truth and phantasy love waits,
Sees the beatific sight,
Ideal forms unearthly fair
That haunt with music and with light
Hill and tree and wave and air,
Or rise, by shaping fancy wrought,
Warm with passion, clear with thought,
By a subtle-simple art
Fashioned out of love's own heart.

THE SPIRITS.

Sweet, O Merlin, is thy singing;
As of old, when mighty Pan
Sang before the birth of man,
Nature thrills with the sweet ringing.
We are nature, we are artless;
And our heart, that is not heartless,
Singeth out as simply free
As a bird upon a tree.
But thy song hath deeper seeming,
And within the boding breast

Wakes a visionary gleaming,
A sweet tumult of unrest.
Merlin, whence that deeper part?
Is it nature? is it art?
And what is art—this moving plan
That nature knows not but only man?

MERLIN.

Art is nature raised above
Accident by human love.
Marring mist of accident,
By chance and vile occasion sent,
Touched with love's divining rod
Rolls away, reveals the God
All bare of limb, all clothed with awe,
Pure nature moulded by a law
Not Nature's to a perfect whole
Whose measure is the maker's soul.
Nature with a sleep doth cover
Her dim beauty, till a kiss
From the soul of man the lover

Fills her waking eyes with bliss,
Bliss half his and half her own,
Man and nature joined in one.
Lo their child, ideal art,
Part her fact, his fancy part,
All—nature and the human heart.
Who may match with pencilled dye
Hues that emparadise the eye
In Nature's endless pageantry?
To him who sees with a deep delight
The birth, the death, of changeful light
From the rose-red dawn to the moon-pale night.
Their open secret they freely show,
The variance subtle in union sweet
Through soft gradation of hues that meet
And melt and blend in the rainy bow.
What spell is on the charmèd air
When the deft musician flings
Cunning fingers o'er the strings?
Sound is music if love be there.
Sister tone hath answering brother;
He knows the notes that love each other,

Links their liking, and holds afar
Sounds that only meet to jar;
Or,—for love hath gracious lies,
Nor seldom wears a brief disguise,—
Love in discord's self shall be
An excentric harmony:
Masker bold, he cheats the fear
With: "When you think not, I am here!"
Love least looked for is then most dear.—
Love hath language; tender ties,
Intimate affinities
Of strong to weak, of fall to rise,
Link the numbers of rhythmic speech
In golden order each to each,
Where, in living union found,
Thought hath shape, and shape hath sound,
And all are poetry—the art
To voice the universal heart
Of men below and of gods above.—
Love is art, and art is love.
This her glory that her gaze
Hath misgiving of higher things,

Motions of a sweet amaze,
Flashes rare and vanishings
Of a strange celestial grace,
Native to some happier place,
By visionary fancy caught
On prophetic heights of thought,
Where for a moment she may stand
And see, with the seer of ancient days,
Faint and far in a golden haze
The vision of the promised land
Where LOVE UNVEILED shall be lord of all.

THE SPIRITS.

Love lord of all! O sing it again!
Sing us of love, as love seems to men.

MERLIN.

Of all souls the very soul,
Love, art thou alone;
They the parts, and thou the whole,
They many, and thou one.

Thou dost like a garment wear
The morning and the night;
Without thee Nature were not fair,
The sun would give no light.

Thine the carol, thine the wail,
That greets the dawn, the dark;
Thy sob the night calls nightingale,
Thy laugh the day calls lark.

All bliss that owns a human birth
By thee alone is given;
The happy lover calls thee earth,
Sad lovers call thee heaven.

Not all of earth or heaven art thou.
Thy yearning is of earth;
But the clear radiance on thy brow
Knows neither death nor birth.

On fickle wings of vague desire
Thou wanderest abroad;

Bear'st in thy breast the sacred fire,
The burning breath of God.

THE SPIRITS.

Love alone is Lord of all!
Love only Lord of all!
Love Lord of all!
Love—All!

ACT I.

THE WIZARD WELL

On the Heath: by the Wizard Well.

VIVIEN (*alone*).

I WONDER whom my fairy godmother
Meant, at my birth foretelling I should wed
Of men the wisest, who should do my will
To his own hurt, and not I his, though wise.
All men say Merlin is the wisest man;
And he's a knight, and of the Table Round,
And chief of Arthur's council. Is it he,
I wonder? or some younger goodlier man,
Who shall be great yet? But my father says
Wisdom is ever old, love ever young.
I don't know that. But this I long to know:
Shall it be Merlin, or what other man?
They say this well hath such a magic in it,

That at a certain hour of every day—
But what hour no man knows—the maid that looks
Shall see her lover's face. Now will I sing
A song to charm the spirit of the well,
And woo the lucky hour. Sweet love, be kind!

(*Sings.*)

O wizard well, what is in thy heart
To make thee leap so and tremble and start
With a mighty welling-up out of the night?
Hast thou a secret that will to the light,
O wizard well?

MERLIN (*approaching and seeing* VIVIEN, *stops*).

Whom have we here? My fountain has a nymph!
A lissom shape;—and what a subtle look
For one so young and fair! Her dark eyes glow
With passion that is not the idle dream
Of pleasant youth. Merlin, this girl might match
A wizard, were the wizard fool enough
To match him with a girl.—A song-bird too!

VIVIEN (*singing*).

Where is thy wizard? The people say
'Twas the mighty Merlin passed this way,
And drank, and looked with his fateful eyes
Into thy deep heart, and made thee wise,
O wizard well!

MERLIN (*aside*).

And if it were so, what has thy young life,
Which yesterday a doll did satisfy,
To do with Merlin and his fateful eyes?

VIVIEN (*singing*).

O well of wisdom, say me not nay,
For I too would be like Morgan the fay,
Whom wizard Merlin hath taught to know
All sweet strange things that are hid below
For the wise to see.

MERLIN (*aside*).

'Twere an apt pupil!—Merlin, have a care
That thou fulfil not thine own prophecy
About the lion by the leopard slain;
For she is as a leopard, outward fair,
Supple of body, subtle of intent,
And, roused, implacable. Beware of her!

VIVIEN (*singing*).

O wizard well, see, I stoop and lave
My lips and eyes in thy wan cold wave,
And look for Merlin, and see nought there
But my own young face, that is only fair,
Not his, that is lofty and wise.

MERLIN.

Certes, it were uncivil to deny
So sweet a suppliant.

(*He comes behind her unobserved, and looks over her into the well.*)

VIVIEN.

Heavens! I see a face
Noble and gentle, holding passionate fire
Within controlling calm; a man of men!
If he were only mine! O watery shape,
See how I stoop to kiss thee.
(*Merlin draws back.*) Oh! he's gone!

MERLIN.

Sweet lady, he is here. Nay, shrink not so.
Mislike you then the veritable shape
Whose counterfeit you kissed?

VIVIEN.

You had no right
To steal upon me so, and see me stoop
To love unsought. Yet, sweet friend, I forgive you.
If you are he. Are you the mighty wizard?

MERLIN.

An you mean Merlin, I'm his dearest friend,
And he hath taught me many secret arts
And wonderful.

VIVIEN.

I wish I had been you!
Would he have taught me, think you?

MERLIN.

Had he felt
As I do now, your wish had been his will.

VIVIEN.

You speak me fair; and if you fairly mean it,
Show me such wonder as shall well assure
That you have been with Merlin.

MERLIN.

What you will.
See, I will put for your delight alone
A garden round this well, and people it

With knights and ladies who shall lightly move
To music that shall shame the nightingale
To hush his ruder note.

VIVIEN.

O excellent!

MERLIN *draws a circle round them with his staff, then dips it in the well and sprinkles the circle, then waves it thrice round* VIVIEN'S *head, repeating—*

Beauty be round thee,
Beneath, and above;
For thrice have I wound thee
The spell of love.

The scene changes to a fair garden, wherein knights and ladies walk and dance upon the greensward to the music of an unseen Choir, who sing this—

Song.

On rosy pinions
The young-eyed love
Drops from above
On his happy minions.

Dear hopes, dark fears
On his bright wings bringing,
He comes with singing,
He goes with tears.

O trust him never,
The light-winged boy!
His rose of joy
Has a sharp thorn ever.
On earth nought cheers
When away he's winging;
He comes with singing,
He goes with tears.

VIVIEN.

No dream was ever half so beautiful.
What a gay company!

MERLIN.

Nay, what a sad one!
See in their restless eyes languor and longing,

Unsatisfied desire ; and hear you not
The song they dance to, with his sad refrain
Of love that comes with singing and goes with tears ?

VIVIEN.

Can people dance to that ?

MERLIN.

Ay, marry, can they,
And when he's gone for ever, dance the more.

VIVIEN.

I could not dance so. When I cease to love,
Then I shall hate.

MERLIN.

Nay, some of them hate too,
And yet they dance ; and you will do the like,
When you have been to Court.

VIVIEN.

How know you, sir,
That I shall go to Court?

MERLIN.

I read it now
In your bright eyes: when I said "Court," they glistened.

VIVIEN.

The Count my father says I must to Court
When Easter comes again, for I am now
Sixteen last Easter, and have been confirmed.

MERLIN.

Two weighty reasons!—(*Aside.*) Pity, holy Church
Should ope the door to let sweet nature out
And the world in!—What think you of my garden?

VIVIEN.

'Tis fairyland! But whither are they gone,
That goodly company?

MERLIN.

Back into air,
Into thin air, their native element.
You did not fancy they would dance for ever?
The garden must go too.

VIVIEN.

O leave me that!
For I would wander in it oft alone
And think of——

MERLIN.

What?

VIVIEN.

Nay, I will say no more,
Who have said too much already.

MERLIN.

Lady mine,
This garden shall remain for your delight
So long as you shall in your heart of hearts
Care aught for him who gave it.

VIVIEN.

Then 'twill bloom
While my heart beats.

MERLIN.

God grant it may be so!

VIVIEN.

Each day, when you are gone, I'll pluck a flower
And lay it for remembrance on my breast,
As I do now.

(*She reaches to pluck a flower.*)

O wonder! what is this?
My hand passed through it clean, and it broke not,
As 'twere a shadow!

MERLIN.

'Tis a waking dream.
These are but cheats and unsubstantial shows,
No further may the force of magic go.
But real flowers to lay on love's own breast,
And real fruits that shall be good to eat,
Are born of toil, and through slow moons mature.

VIVIEN.

O what a pity that I cannot wear them!

MERLIN.

Go, put a single heart's-ease in a pot
Within your chamber-window, water it
Each day, and watch it ope his tender eyes;
Then say: "This is my love, and with good care,
Thank God! it blooms."

VIVIEN.

You have a humble taste!
A single simple heart's-ease!

MERLIN.

Will content
A single simple heart.

VIVIEN.

My heart, I own,
However single, is not quite so simple.
I much prefer these pretty cheats, although
One cannot pluck them.—Will you show me how
To make a magic garden?

MERLIN.

That I will:
'Twere no hard trick for love and youth to play.
But what shall be my guerdon?

VIVIEN.

That I please you.
But if I please you not, then show me nothing,
For nothing then will please.

MERLIN (*aside*).

There might you hear,
Merlin, the clanking of love's golden chains!——
Sweet lady mine, I kiss your hand and go.

VIVIEN.

And go! and whither? and when do you come back?

MERLIN.

I needs must go abroad and bide a year.
But on St John's Eve, this day come a year,
I will be with you, be you where you may.

VIVIEN.

A whole long year! Well! it is very well.
Had I your power, you should not leave me so!
But we poor women must say "Very well";
What can we else?—And you have taught me nothing,
Not one of all your charms!

MERLIN.

You are all charms ;
And have a magic mightier far than mine,
To bind the wizard's self. What would you more?

VIVIEN.

A charm to keep you ever at my side,
And make you love me.

MERLIN.

Other charm is none
But love to win love, or to keep it, won.
Rely on that ; nor seek without you powers
That God hath put within. Ask your own heart,
And tell me truly : do you truly love me
As I love you?

VIVIEN.

Now by my maiden troth
I love you better than a maiden should
Who loves she knows not whom !

MERLIN.

My Vivien!

(*Takes her in his arms and kisses her.*)

Now shall this long kiss that has linked our lips
Be as a charm to lure thee back again
Thy Merlin.

VIVIEN.

You are Merlin! you are he
I dreamt of by the well, and looked to find,
And found! O happy, happy Vivien!

MERLIN.

And him I looked not ever to find again
I found there.

VIVIEN.

Whom?

MERLIN.

The master-dæmon, Love,

My Vivien,—a good master, so you be
His servant, not his slave.

VIVIEN.

Nay, I would be
His slave, so you would give me what I want.

MERLIN.

What is it you want?

VIVIEN.

O, many, many things!
But first and now, that ring upon your hand,
To wear on mine when you are far away.

MERLIN.

You cannot wear it. 'Twould proclaim to all
That you had been with Merlin, ere he came
To claim you.

VIVIEN.

Then I'll hang it round my neck
And hide it in my bosom.

MERLIN.

A sweet nest!
But 'tis my signet-ring of solemn use,
And hath a virtue dangerous to one
Who knows not how to use it.

VIVIEN.

Not to me;
For you will show me how to use it right.

MERLIN.

Anon, my minion, when I come again.

VIVIEN.

Now! now!

MERLIN.

Not now.

VIVIEN.

I pray you let me go, sir,
Who hold my love so cheap. I gave you more
Than maiden should, because I trusted you;
And you deny me the first little thing
I ask, because you trust me not. I know
The maid you trust; 'tis Morgan, Arthur's sister;
You tell her all you know; she has but to ask,
And she will have the ring. Nay, let me go,
For I will not be second, though it be
To the sister of a king. Unhand me, sir!

MERLIN.

Now this is very madness! Vivien,
I swear I love her not, nor shall she have
The ring.

VIVIEN.

Then give it me.

MERLIN.

Well, there it is,
Since you will have it so. But have a care
You lose it not, nor use it heedlessly.

VIVIEN.

Now that is like my gentle Merlin! Now
I dare believe you love me. Tell me, then,
What virtue has it that is dangerous,
For I would fain avoid it.

MERLIN.

'Tis a charm
To put to sleep whomso the wearer will
So long the wearer please.

VIVIEN.

O excellent!
But I see nothing dangerous in that.

MERLIN.

Nay, promise me you will not play with it;
'Tis for grave uses.

VIVIEN.

Well, I promise you,
If you will give me—just one little kiss.

MERLIN.

A thousand!

VIVIEN.

No, just one, sir!—There! I knew
You were not to be trusted!

MERLIN.

'Tis a breach
To enter heaven by! Vivien, my own love,
Farewell!

VIVIEN.

Farewell!

MERLIN.

Vivien!

VIVIEN.

What is it then?

MERLIN.

Say once more that you love me—*love* me, Vivien.

VIVIEN.

You foolish man! I love you far too well;
And if you promise not to kiss me, mind,
I'll seal it with one little parting kiss.
There! Are you satisfied?

MERLIN.

As he can be
Who, quitting heaven, has one thought—to return.

VIVIEN.

Let it be soon. Good-bye!

MERLIN.

My life, good-bye!

(*Exit.*)

VIVIEN.

And so my fairy godmother was right;
'Tis Merlin after all. Well, he is younger
Than I had fancied; a right goodly man,
And of a noble presence. How his eye
Gleamed when he looked on me! 'Tis very sure
He loves me passing well. And he shall tell me
All I would know. I will go straight to Court
And there out-rival Morgan. Haughty Princess,
Look to your laurels. I have got the ring,
And the ring's master. Vivien shall be King!

ACT II.

ST JOHN'S EVE

A Chamber in the Palace.

MORGAN *and* GWENDOLEN *working at embroidery.*

MORGAN.

GIVE me another skein—the yellow. And now
Tell me, what think you of your pretty rival
The sprightly Vivien? I have heard the Queen
Doth simply dote on her young maid-of-honour.

GWENDOLEN.

Young maid-of-honour truly! a forward minx,
A chit, a green girl, newly out o' the nest;
Yet she forsooth has no thought but to out-fly
Her elders and her betters.

MORGAN.

You mistake her.
She hath a rare wit. Greenness never knew
That unabashable brow ; no haughtier cliff
Affronts the Atlantic. Have you seen her roused?
Her eyes flash thunders. Where her fell tongue falls,
Were it coat of mail, it bites. Nought turns her edge
Save adamantine right. Yet can she be,
When it suits her, gentle as a summer night,
Mild as the treacherous ocean when he hath pent
His winds and smoothed his waters till they smile.

GWENDOLEN.

You draw a demon.

MORGAN.

Let the devil beware!
I draw a woman.

GWENDOLEN.

Nay, the devil and she

Are hand and glove: how could she else have cast
Poor Enid into such a deathly swound,
Nor shout nor shake nor sharpest needle-thrust
Into the quick nerve 'neath the finger-nail
Could rouse her; and all because she did upbraid her
For rumouring of the Queen and Lancelot.
All stiff and cold as any corpse she lay,
Till we bethought to fetch the coroner;
When with a word she waked her.

MORGAN.

'Tis the ring
She had of Merlin; I saw it on her hand;
And she did boast to me she hath his love,
Who is not worthy of it. O Gwendolen,
She hath beguiled me of my dearest hope!
I say not that he loved me; yet his eye
Rested on mine so kindly, and, when we met,
Gave me such sunny welcome, that I—hoped;
Nor haply but for her had hoped in vain.

GWENDOLEN.

Come, be a woman; love where you are loved.
You have about you many a goodly knight,
Noble and gentle, in the very flower
Of lusty youth, far better formed to love.

MORGAN.

'Tis not the lusty life that makes the lover,
But fire i' the soul; and *he* hath a soul all fire.

GWENDOLEN.

An the fire warm me not, 'tis nought to me.
Give where you get; and whoso lets, let be.

MORGAN.

You savour more of policy than love.

GWENDOLEN.

Nay, an my love knew nought of policy,
I'd hang myself.

MORGAN.

True lovers have done so.

GWENDOLEN.

The more fool they!

MORGAN.

Such folly might be mine.
But have you ever loved?

GWENDOLEN.

I have loved as well
As men deserve: the woman who loves more
Hath more of love than wit.

MORGAN.

Love is not taught
Of wit, but teacheth wit.

GWENDOLEN.

'Tis very true;

For love is taught of folly, and love's event
Teacheth the fool. Dear lady, be advised.
Choose a good honest happy-hearted man,
Not over-wise,—have you not wit for two?—
And he will prize you more for his defect.
There now is Guyomar; *he's* a proper man;—
A gallant youth, and of a sprightly humour
That looks on the bright o' things, a merry soul.

MORGAN.

I love not merry souls; or they are noisy,
Or funny, which is worse. A sad high soul
Had took my fancy more.

GWENDOLEN.

You hanker still
After your wizard, whom you cannot have,
And miss what might be. The apple out of reach
Shows fairer, but the apple in the hand
Hath this charm, you can eat it.

MORGAN.

In my hand

I have no apple good or bad.

GWENDOLEN.

You're not

An apple-tree. Go, choose one, sit beneath
And shake the bough; 'twill fall into your lap.
Here comes young Guyomar. An you shake not him,
I warrant he'll shake you.

GUYOMAR (*entering*).

Good morrow, ladies.

GWENDOLEN.

Good morrow, Guyomar. What gallant news
Have flushed your face so with a sanguine joy?

GUYOMAR.

Great news. The King commands a solemn tourney

Betwixt the Queen's knights and the Table Round ;
Each knight to bring a lady, and wear i' the helm
Her glove. Sir Gawain leads us for the Queen,
And wears her favour. Lady, now you know
What brought me hither.

MORGAN.

No indeed I don't.

GUYOMAR.

My casque is empty.

MORGAN.

When the head is in it,
You mean.

GUYOMAR.

Quite so. But, lady, my heart is full ;
And asks your glove.

MORGAN (*aside*).

O, most preposterous G!

Was ever such a—G-lover?

GUYOMAR.

What says my lady?

MORGAN.

That she is sorry for your empty casque
And your full heart. 'Tis not a fair division.

GWENDOLEN.

Nay, an you shake it so, the branch will break
Or e'er the apple fall.

MORGAN.

Sweet cousin, peace!

He does not see it.

GUYOMAR.

But what about the glove?

MORGAN.

'Tis custom for a knight, before he ask
A lady publicly to set her honour
At risk upon his head, to do some deed
That may attest his love and knightly faith.
Even Hercules, for love of Omphale,
Did hold the distaff ere he slew the Hydra.

GUYOMAR.

Of Hercules I know enough to swear by,
No further. But by Hercules I swear,
Command me any deed, and I will do it,
So I may win your——

MORGAN.

Glove!

GUYOMAR.

Quite so; you read
My thought beforehand.

MORGAN.

Great wits jump, you know.

GUYOMAR.

Quite so; your wits at least jump like a cat;
I'm not so sure o' mine. But what is it
You'd have me do?

MORGAN.

To sit down here before me
And hold this skein the while I reel it off.
Hold your hands so. They tremble! Are you cold?

GUYOMAR.

No, I am hot. 'Tis warmer work than tilting,
To sit so. I had rather break a lance
With deadliest opposite, than sit opposite you
And feel your fingers touch mine, and your eyes
That smiling mock me.

MORGAN.

And how do you feel i' the lists?

GUYOMAR.

I clench my teeth, and feel nought but the man
In front, how to unhorse him.

MORGAN (*aside*).

After all,
This thing's a man.—Well, clench your teeth so now,
And feel nought but the skein, how you may hold it.

GUYOMAR.

And so I would, if you were not behind it.

MORGAN.

Nay, an you like me not, you need not stay.

GUYOMAR.

But I do like you; that's the worst of it.

When I'm away, I'm longing to be here ;
Though when I'm here, I'm so uncomfortable.

MORGAN.

Poor fellow !

VIVIEN (*entering*).

Lady, the Queen would speak with you
An hour hence in her chamber.—I am sorry
To have seen an interesting situation !

MORGAN.

You see no interest—except your own.

VIVIEN.

Nay, 'twill much interest the Queen to hear
The Lady Morgan trains her youthful knights
In arts as well as arms. You should be grateful,
Sir Guyomar. It is not every knight
That has the Lady Morgan for a mistress

In sweet domestic duties. But you hold
The skein awry ; pardon me, let me show you.
(*Leans softly over him and adjusts his hands with gentle pressure.*)

GUYOMAR.

With two such mistresses I cannot fail
To learn apace.

VIVIEN.

Nay, you must not have two !
One of us would be jealous !

MORGAN.

I have your message.
Doubtless the Queen expects you.

VIVIEN.

No ; she said,
If it amused me, I might stay with you
A little. There, you hold it wrong again,

Guyomar. When my lady pulls the thread
With petulant twitch, as she is doing now,
Your hands should humour her, so,—

(*Leans again over him and places her hands against his within the skein.*)

—and let the thread
Run lightly over, else 'tis sure to break,
And yours will be the blame, you naughty boy!

GUYOMAR.

Nay, I would evermore be so in fault
But to be so set right.

VIVIEN.

Don't look at me!
Look at the skein. My lady will be angry!

MORGAN.

'Tis past endurance. Lady Gwendolen,
Will you relieve Sir Guyomar of the skein?

VIVIEN.

I told you she'd be angry. Better come
Away with me now.

GUYOMAR.

Nay, such sudden leaving
Would be uncivil.

MORGAN.

He cannot leave too soon
Who has outstayed his welcome.

VIVIEN.

I told you so.

GUYOMAR.

I did not mean——

MORGAN.

Fools never mean.—Begone!

(*Exit* GUYOMAR.)

Why do you not go with him? You have won him.

VIVIEN.

That's why. Were he not won, I might have gone.
The hunter does not follow the bagged hare.

MORGAN.

You are a hunter!

VIVIEN.

I amuse myself
As other women do.

MORGAN.

But on your hand
You wear a pledge you should not sully so.

VIVIEN (*glancing at the ring*).

That thing? Poor Merlin! Plainly 'tis a pledge
That he loves me, but not that I love him.

GWENDOLEN.

'Tis plain indeed!

VIVIEN.

I did not speak to you.

MORGAN (*eagerly*).

You do not love him! You love Guyomar!

VIVIEN.

I did not say I loved or one or other.
'Tis they love me. Merlin is wise and potent,
And will no doubt be useful. Guyomar
Is young and fresh and merry as a lark.
Why not have both? Each of his kind is good,
The one for use, the other for delight.

MORGAN.

And you would use him! And in love prefer
That empty-headed boy! O shame! O shame!

VIVIEN.

You may love age, and happy may you be!
Youth will have youth; young Guyomar for me!

MERLIN (*who has entered unobserved*).

Have then your wish; go to young Guyomar.
I do release you. Give me back my ring.

VIVIEN (*abashed*).

Your ring!

MERLIN.

My ring; the ring I pledged you with.
You would not give it to young Guyomar?
(VIVIEN *reluctantly hands him the ring.*)
Since we two parted, I have had one thought—
To meet again; ay, and a thousand times
Have chid the slow sun and the laggard hours
That kept me from her side. I little dreamed

How over her the same hours swiftly flew
And paled my promised bliss. 'Tis over now
And gone, my late-born short-lived dream of love.
I have had rude awakening. Yet I blame not
That you have ceased to love me,—that you love
Young Guyomar; for you were but a girl
And knew not other men, knew not yourself.
But that you should have traded on my name,
Flaunted my ring, and callously designed
To utilise my love,—I marvel yet
At one so young, so heartless, and so bold.
Yet,—for I would not harbour enmity
Where love hath nestled,—I forgive. Farewell.

(*Exit.*)

MORGAN.

I looked not to have ceased from wrath; but now
I pity you. Come, Gwendolen, the Queen
Expects us.

GWENDOLEN.

Ta ta? Love to Guyomar!

(*Exeunt* MORGAN *and* GWENDOLEN.)

VIVIEN.

Plundered! deserted! pitied! flouted at!
And with impunity! Is this a dream?
Can it be true? Is this tame victim Vivien?
The ring is gone,—and Merlin,—and he has taught me
Not one of all his arts. I am undone.
Morgan will triumph; all the Court will hear,
And make them merry; even this Gwendolen,
This lady's-maid, will laugh at me. O Hell!
Give me a dagger!—No, it may not be.
I must walk gently up to my revenge.
I must regain the ring, and to that end
Bring Merlin to my feet again. He loves me,
And I must feign to love him. 'Twill be hard
With this huge hate within; not to be done
But by who loves the doing. After all,
Who but a fool would hate the needful means
To his own end? If 'tis the shrewdest weapon,
Shall I not kiss the blade? I know his haunts
I' the forest; I will straight go seek him there,
And see which is the wiser, he or I.

O he is wise! He thinks me but a girl,
Who knows not men, not she! nor yet herself.
I know my man well; he has two weak points:
A tender heart,—well, that is mine already,—
And what he calls his conscience. With such cards
I cannot fail to win,—were we alone.
Merlin 'twere easy to deceive, but Morgan,—
She will oppose, and she will see the game.
Which is the mightier? She thinks she loves him;
I know I hate him. Love may come and go,
But hatred is immortal. Now I hate,
I am a thing inspired. O God-like hate,
Thou liftest me to superhuman state.
Lead on, I follow thee to my revenge.

ACT III.

UNDER THE WHITE-THORN

A Wood.

MERLIN (*alone*).

WHENCE then man? Out of God? or Matter?
Or both commingled? A genial batter
Of God and matter unequally mixed?
Through ingrate matter a God energising!
What wonder the outcome is something surprising,
By cut-and-dry formulæ not to be fixed,
Opposing exception to each narrow rule,
The despair of the pedant, the dread of the fool,
Self-taught, uncurbable, life his teacher,
A wayward plastic passionate creature,
Blent with alloy of sturdier ore;
Heat it, hammer it, more and more

Firms his strength to an iron frame,
Casing fit for a soul all flame.
Man, the star-measurer, sun-analyser,
Of the Great Mother the one surpriser
Where at her mighty loom she stands
With time, the shuttle, atwixt her hands,
Weaving swiftly to and fro
Life and death and weal and woe
Into the garment of God's own stature,
His royal raiment that men call Nature.

But soft! Who comes? No more of man:
Here's woman—quite another plan!
Such artless art, such artful heart,
Her art is nature, her nature art.
For she can smile, and she can weep,
And what a silence she can keep!
And she can talk too, and such a lingo
The deuce himself cries *Non distinguo.*
Her *no* means *yes*, her *yes* oft *no;*
Yet not even contraries can show
The subtle shiftings of her will,

That ranges the gamut of good and ill;
Yet be it well or ill, as fate
'Tis sure she never can be straight.
Still must we doubt, still may we grieve
Whether we do or don't believe.
What solves the doubt? What turns the scale?
A practised blush, a turning pale
At the right moment—off they fly,
The wise distrust, the critic eye.
Yet how to doubt,—O God above!—
The smile, the tear, of her we love?

What do I see! She faints!—Or else she feigns,—
Which is it? 'Tis well acted, if 'tis feigned.—
I doubt too lightly. May not a God-sent chance
Have touched her better part, and waked the pain
That purifies? Needs I do make assay
If she be false or true.

(*Advances to her.*)

What accident
Makes me of all men witness to the pain
I fain would heal?

VIVIEN.

I came to hide my grief
From cruel eyes. I pray you mock me not.
Since you have left me, leave me!

MERLIN.

I left you not
Till well assured that you had all left me.

VIVIEN.

You left me a whole year to bide the brunt
Of cruel comment in a scandalous Court.
And when to shield myself I, woman-like,
Lightlied our dear love, and made game of you,
Whom in my heart I worshipped, you, my lover,
My chosen knight, my should-have-been defender,
Do on a sudden burst invade the scene,
Like Jove, all thunderbolts, abjure your faith,
Insult my truth, make our sweet secret love
An open shame, ourselves a laughing-stock
To wise men and to fools. Yet 'tis not that,

The public shame, though to a woman bitter;
'Tis to have lost, what thinking to have won
I gave my good name, would have given my life,
'Tis to be scorned, 'tis to be all alone.

MERLIN.

Do you not then love Guyomar?

VIVIEN.

Do you think
I, Vivien, would decline upon a boy,
A beardless, downy, inarticulate thing,
Or if articulate, infallible,
As knowing all things! I love dignity
And power, that love not a raw unripe youth,
But the wide temples and the mighty brows
Of thunder-wielding Jove. One such I loved;
But he hath flung me from him like a weed.

MERLIN.

If I have wronged you, I am truly sorry.

VIVIEN.

I thank you for that *if*, it is so healing
To the wounded heart! I will go tell my comrades,
Who heard you flout me: Merlin doth make amends;
Says, *if* he wronged me, why then he is sorry!

MERLIN.

I did not mean it so. I am truly sorry
That I had so misjudged you: tell them that.

VIVIEN.

I care not what they think, whom I love not
Nor honour. But 'tis misery that you
I honoured in my heart, and woman-like
Had hoped to please, do in your heart of hearts
Distrust poor Vivien.

MERLIN.

By heaven, she weeps!

Needs I were more or less than man to doubt
Those heavenly drops. Vivien, by those sweet tears
From sweeter eyes, in whose pathetic fount
Angels inhabit, I offer you a love
Most absolute, and henceforth do renounce
All thought of doubt.

VIVIEN.

If I did weep but now
To be scorned so, more am I fain to weep,
Now I am loved.

MERLIN.

Nay, rather lean your head
Here on my heart, and I will kiss away
The precious rain, that love hath turned to joy.

VIVIEN.

Then make your arm a pillow for my head
That is with over-grief and over-joy

Grown weary; and wake me not, for I would sleep,
And dream of—Merlin.

MERLIN.

Is this earth or heaven?
Rude arms, be tender round this tender thing.
I'll sing to her a lullaby as soft
As snow-flakes upon water, as the dew
Of even dropping from the wings of sleep.

(*Sings.*)

For my wonder
Make a bed,
Roses red
And violets under,
And above her
A bending lover.
Low—breathe low!
She sleeps—
My lady sleeps—
Sleeps!

On light pinions
Of a dove
O'er my love
Float, airy minions.
In dreams steep her
Deep, O deeper!
Low—breathe low!
She sleeps—
My lady sleeps—
Sleeps!

How beautiful! All round the snowy neck
A finger-breadth apart run two faint lines
Of pearly grey, that make the opposèd white
Show whiter. On this stalk in hue a lily
Hangs the consummate rose. Ah might I print
But one kiss where the marble-archèd brow
Casts o'er the curvèd lid a pearly shade
Like snow on snow! Nay, nay, it might awake her,
And break the perfect wonder of her sleep.
I'll lay my head as close as I may dare,
And follow her into the land of dream,

Where we may meet, and I may haply dare,
What here for very love I dare not. So,—
Sweet sleep befall me!

(*Sleeps.*)

VIVIEN (*raising herself cautiously*).

At last he is asleep!
And the ring-hand unclenched! O happy chance!
Stay, did I hear him murmur, "Vivien"?
He wakes!—Dear Merlin!—Merlin?—No, thank God,
He does not wake! Now must I make essay
To take it off his hand as tenderly
As upon mine he put it on that day
When first I wore it.

(*Draws it off stealthily; then holds it up in triumph.*)

Lo! the spoiler spoiled!
Back to thy proper place!

(*Puts it on; then looking at it.*)

He called thee his!

(*Raises her hand.*)

Sleep, Merlin! wake not till *I*—bid thee wake!

But shall I wake him? He did play the lover
So deftly that, did I not hate him so,
Almost I could have loved him. Out of doubt
He loves me passing well; but 'tis because
He doth believe the thing that is not is.
He will not always be deceived; and then—
Then will be Morgan's hour.—It shall not be;
He never shall be hers. Were I to spare him,
He never would stand by and see me wreak
My vengeance upon Morgan,—would oppose
And moralise with lily-livered saws
And maxims from the Sermon on the Mount
Of meekness and forgiveness and the rest;
As though an eagle, a winged thunderbolt
Of Jove, the curvèd beak and cruel claws
All red with lordly rapine, would descend
To cower and coo among the holy doves,—
O how I hate them! No, it cannot last.
Since end it must, 'twere well I end it now.
Therefore, O Merlin, sleep, and wake no more!—
How grand he looks!

(*Stoops to kiss him, but draws back.*)

Nay, better let the past
Be past; relenting is not in the game.
Poor Merlin! I shall miss him, now he's gone.
Young Guyomar must comfort me for this.

(*Exit.*)

MORGAN (*entering*).

He cannot be far off. Now let me stop
And think what I shall say. I greatly fear
He may mislike it, for he loved her well.
But I must warn him she was overheard,
Then when we left her in my room alone,
To threaten dire revenge, and to that end
To seek him here. God grant I be in time!
For she is prompt to plan, and swift to act.—
This path he loved. Here he would often pace
Long hours, or sit, and commune with himself
And nature.—But he is not here.—A tree
There was, a white-thorn; when the bloom was out
And birds were nesting, he would lie beneath
Still as a stone, looking and listening.
Ay, here it is; and, O my heart, 'tis he!

And fast asleep. How pale he looks! How pure
The blue-veined temples whence the clustering locks
Fall hyacinthine! I have never seen
The face I love with such sweet undisturbed
Serenity of vision, never dared
To pause and linger over every line
As 'twere some statue of a demigod
Breathing in marble. Ah, what happy star
Has wrought this dreamy spell? Who would have
thought
Sleep could be so like death! Or—can it be?—
O God, can he be dead?

(*Kneels, and seizes his hand.*)

No, he's alive,
The faint pulse flickers. Merlin, Merlin, wake!
Wake, Merlin! Oh, he lies as motionless
As Enid. Ha! I have it; the ring is gone;
That devil has bewitched him! What dread power
Shall countervail the ring, that charmèd circle
Which his own magic made? Help, righteous heaven!
Rescue the righteous!

(*Takes from her breast a crucifix.*)

Oh, by this holy sign
Of our salvation, and the blessed hands
That hung thereon, Merlin, awake! arise!—
He moves! his colour comes again! he wakes!
Thank God! thank God!

MERLIN.

Vivien!

MORGAN.

He loves her still;
I am not wanted.

(*Turns her head away.*)

MERLIN.

Vivien, I have had
A dreadful dream. Methought a basilisk
Coiled round my neck, then raised the cruel head
In act to strike, and with her glittering eye
Held me. Anon she fastened on my hand;
Then round my throat tightened her horrid coil

Until I fainted. A long time I lay
Neighbouring on death; when on a sudden there fell
A warmth around me, a light, and in the light
I saw an angel holding over me
A crucifix; and from that Blessed One
Went virtue forth, and through my tingling veins
Life thrilled again; and with a cry I woke.
But with that horror black, that heavenly blaze,
I am all dazed, and in my veins the blood
Doth prick me shrewdly. Vivien, my own love,
Kiss me, and tell me it is all a dream.

MORGAN.

It is no dream.

MERLIN.

It is not Vivien!
Morgan! You here! And where is Vivien?

MORGAN.

The basilisk is gone.

MERLIN.

The basilisk?
What do you mean? Beware! for if you harm her
In aught, your life shall answer it.

MORGAN.

My life
Has answered it already. She is gone.
Your ring is gone with her. She robbed you of it,
And then bewitched you, or bewitched you first
And robbed you after, and left you there for dead.
God and this holy rood have done the rest.

MERLIN.

Vivien is gone! The ring is gone! O God,
Can thy fair creature be so false? Could she
I loved so, she that kissed me, steal a knife
To stab me with?

(*He buries his face in his hands.*)

VIVIEN (*entering from behind and unobserved*).

I am all out of breath.
How stupid to forget the wand that made
The magic garden!—What do I see! O Hell!
He lives! And she is happy! O foolish ring,
Where is thy virtue? Or hath she a magic
Mightier than mine? I will go hide me here
And listen. Now I look, she looks not happy,
And he—well! were he twice alive, he dies.

MORGAN.

Rouse you, dear Merlin.

MERLIN.

Who calls Merlin dear?
Ah me, not Vivien!

VIVIEN (*aside*).

Good!

MORGAN.

Not she indeed.
Sigh not for her who never sighed for you.

MERLIN.

Nay, nay; though love longs ever to be loved,
He waits not, nor withholds, nor weighs out love
By calculated doles of less or more,
As less or more he gets; but like the sun
Pours out his fiery heart no whit the poorer
For all his golden gifts.

(MORGAN *turns aside weeping.*)

Forgive me, friend,
If I have wounded you. Why do you weep?

VIVIEN (*aside*).

The subtle jade! O that I had my will!
She should have cause to weep.

MORGAN.

I am not wounded,

Though bleeding at the heart. I too have loved,
Nor waited, nor withheld, nor weighed out love
As I received, but lavished all my heart
Without return, and now I am alone,
And at the very side of him I love
Tenfold alone.

MERLIN.

Love never is alone.
'Tis smiled upon by the eternal Powers
That gladden earth and heaven. Only the proud
And selfish are alone; them God Himself,
Though Love, sees afar off; they see not Him.

MORGAN.

I am a woman, I have need of love
And not philosophy,—a manly soul
Just strong enough to lean on, weak enough
To need my care.

MERLIN.

Even as you speak, I see

The gates of Eden open once again,
But not for me.

MORGAN.

If not for you, for none.
And why not then for you? You would not take
The snake that stung you to your breast again?
O Merlin, if my love be nought to you,
Then for the love of Him who brought you back
From out her deadly toils, beware of her.
Forget that faithless woman. She is gone.
Think not that God has given you back your life,
To throw that life away.

VIVIEN (*aside*).

O insolent!
But she shall pay for this.

MERLIN.

If she is gone,
The will of God be done. My life is mine

To live where honour leads; if into danger,
Then danger must be run.

VIVIEN (*aside*).

Good! very good!
Let him but stick to that!

MORGAN.

What binds you then
To this unnatural woman?

MERLIN.

I am bound
With the strong cords of pity and love, the same
That chained the Titan to his flinty bed
Alone amid the icy Caucasus,
The while the vulture, his fell bed-fellow,
Preyed on his mighty heart, and all around
The helpless Nereid mourned.

MORGAN.

Helpless indeed,
Seeing you are not minded to be free.

MERLIN.

Am I not free? The law I love and honour
Alone I live by, and obeying it
Have peace within.

VIVIEN (*aside*).

I have him! Yet 'twere well
I struck a blow ere Morgan strike again.
The flowers I had but now of Guyomar,—
Ay, these will do. Now forward, Vivien!
(*Advances to* MERLIN.)
At last you are awake! You slept so sound
I could not bear to wake you; so I went
To make you a posy of wood-violets.
Are they not sweet?
(*Offers them; he mutely declines.*)

You frown! You will not have them!
What is the matter? Ah, I see it all!
That woman has been at you.

MERLIN.

Vivien,
How could you practise on your lover's sleep,
And steal away the ring you coveted,
To use against his life?

VIVIEN.

It is a lie,
A base invention of the woman there,
To ruin me, and have you to herself.
Is this the love you bear me, this the faith,
Who but an hour ago vowed nevermore
To harbour doubt?

MERLIN.

Vows are the passionate prayers
Of the fond heart; they have no prophecy,
No vision of the future,—ah, not even
True vision of the past!

VIVIEN.

Then may true love
Break vows within an hour?

MERLIN.

Ay, for just cause,
So he break not faith.

VIVIEN.

Then give your love to Morgan;
She may be thankful for it; 'tis not fit
For *my* poor human uses.

MERLIN.

Yet 'tis true
And tender.

VIVIEN.

True, if to believe a lie
Be truth—and tender, if 'tis to be tender
To cast me off upon the first suggestion

Of a designing woman. 'Tis a plot
To oust me from my place.

MORGAN.

The ring! the ring!
You robbed him of the ring and used it on him.

VIVIEN.

Merlin, I pray you bid this insolent
Be silent. I will answer but to you.

MERLIN.

Peace! peace!

VIVIEN.

There is no peace; 'tis open war.
I did not use it. And—for I did take it—
Was it not mine? Did you not give it me?
And though you took it back, the time we quarrelled,
Did you not mean it to be mine again,
Now we are one? But if you want it back,
Take back your love with it; give it to Morgan,

'Tis fitting she should have it whom you love.

(*Offers it to* MERLIN.)

MERLIN.

Nay, nay, I want it not.—That awful dream
Gives sad corroboration.

VIVIEN.

Help me Heaven,
If every time you have a heavy supper
And a bad dream, I must be taxed with murder!

MERLIN.

And did you then not purpose to desert me?

VIVIEN.

Why am I here? And where should Vivien go?
I am no princess, have no retinue
Of lusty knights about me.

MERLIN.

Vile suggestion

Against another may hurt you, cannot help you.
How am I troubled! the sad soul divided
Betwixt a dear hope and a dreadful fear!
How to resolve it? If she did forsake me
Is doubtful, is denied; and if she did,
'Twas not for long, nor publicly; and she
Says that she meant it not. My honour saved,
I may o'erlook. This hand shall never cut
The cords of pity and love. Come, Vivien!

(VIVIEN *makes a mock reverence to* MORGAN.)

Nay, mock not, where I honour and owe thanks.

(*Gives his hand to* MORGAN.)

My friend, I thank you from my heart. Farewell.

(*Exeunt* MERLIN *and* VIVIEN.)

MORGAN.

O vanity of wisdom, that saves others
And not himself! I see the bitter end,
Read his death-warrant in her cruel eyes.
He will not see it, he is lost! O God,
Hast Thou the heart to see and not to save?

ACT IV.

THE MAGIC MIRROUR

A Room in Merlin's *House.*

At the upper end, the Mirrour behind a curtain.

The Spirits of the Mirrour.

1*st Semi-Chorus.*

In the beginning of days,
Ere the sun was born,
Mirrour of right, thy rays
Made in heaven an endless morn.

Fashioned by God's own hand
For a breastplate rare,
Hiding his heart with a band
Of light as the day-star fair.

Shine forth, infinite truth,
Than the sun more bright,
Within thee infinite ruth
Softens thine awful light.

2d Semi-Chorus.

A mirrour to thee too, O man,
High God hath given,
Wrought on the self-same plan,
A lucent witness of heaven!

Clear to the single eye
That is clear within,
To the soul that loveth a lie
Dim with the shadow of sin.

Happy who finds thy face
As the noonday clear,
On him from a happy place
Falls the light of an endless year.

MERLIN.

Often, ye gentle monitors, your song
Has hither led my steps, but never yet
With such reluctant longing; for within
My heart misgives me. Shall I—dare I look?
(*Reaches out, then withdraws his hand.*)
I dare not look; it were a sight of doom.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS.

Woe to the mortal
Who shunneth thee ever,
Heaven opes him her portal
Never, oh never.

MERLIN.

Nay, let me know the worst, which knowing not
I cannot better, known I might amend.
I dread it as the patient dreads the knife
That hurts him but to heal. Soul, see thyself!
(*Draws the curtain. The Mirrour is dark and dim.*)

'Tis as I feared; for in my soul I felt
A trouble dim. I have made of Vivien
Occasion and excuse of all unrest
Which in myself had root; and nature, calm
And healing, and the God within the breast,
Unsought, were silent. There is no excuse,
Nor need be no occasion. Nothing comes
To man of hard or easeful but is good
To the sincere soul. Spirit holy and pure,
Search thou my heart, if any wicked way
Or wish be there, and lead me into light.

(*As he speaks, the Mirrour clears and brightens, irradiating him with its light.*)

Chorus of Spirits.

Beacon, O God-sent light,
Through storm and stress!
Shield him with heavenly might,
Breastplate of righteousness!

(Vivien *enters;* Merlin *hastily draws the curtain: the room darkens.*)

VIVIEN.

What have you got behind the curtain there?
Something improper, else you had not made
Such haste to hide it. Nay, for I will see
What 'tis you keep so slyly under lock
That none may know, and visit all alone
So regularly. 'Tis the first time now
Of many times I find the door unlocked
And Bluebeard in his closet. Tell me now
What is your skeleton? Is she live or dead?

MERLIN.

Nor live nor dead, but is for evermore.

VIVIEN.

You riddle well; but I, who am not clever,
Do woman-like prefer to read the answer
With my own eyes.

MERLIN.

You shall, my Vivien,

If, when you know, you will. 'Tis no sweet sight
To unprepared eyes. It is a mirrour
Of most rare property.

VIVIEN.

O excellent!
My most sage Merlin, vain as any girl,
Consults his mirrour, locks him in with it,
Hangs over it, and asks it day by day
If he is looking younger. Had you asked
Of me, who love you far too well to flatter,
I could have told you: since I saw you first
You look much older, spite of all my pains
To make you look as handsome and as young
As Vivien's lover should. Your grey hairs come
Faster than I can pluck them. Your pale brow,
That ever bore some lines of moody thought,
Is furrowed deeper, and your solemn eyes
So super-solemn grown, that people ask
How ever I could fancy you, a man
Dull and unsociable and all unlike me.

They little dream my moody Merlin hangs,
An elderly Narcissus, o'er his glass,
And bids it flatter him.

MERLIN.

Nay, Vivien, nay;
The only glass that ever flattered Merlin
Was your sweet look and languished air before
You loved too well to flatter. But this glass
Is as a revelation; nothing hid
I' the secret soul, but hath his counterfeit
And bodily presentment mirroured clear.
No question here of sweet alluring eyes
And smiles of subtle meaning; every thought,
And wish, or good or evil, foul or fair,
Writ plain as hell and heaven. Will you look?

VIVIEN.

You are so strange, Merlin, you frighten me.
And now I think of it, I will not look,

For you would play me some unmanly trick
To mock me with your mirrour.

MERLIN.

Mortal none
May foul this glass with image of aught else
But with his own being evil.

VIVIEN.

So you say;
But I mistrust you and your looking-glass.

MERLIN.

Nay then, my love, I would not have you look
Against your will, nor counter you in aught.
Come, let us go.

VIVIEN.

Now, that is just like you!

So like a man, to take me at my word,
My very first word, when you know right well
I want to see it.

MERLIN.

If you will, you may.

VIVIEN.

Of course I may,—and will.

(*Draws the curtain.*)

How dull it is!
I can see nothing. Stay, I see a face!
O what a monster! Not the least like me!
A trick, a cowardly unmanly trick,
So to insult me with this devil's glass!

(*Strikes the glass. Thunder and lightning.*)

O save me, Merlin! dearest Merlin, save me!

MERLIN (*taking her hand*).

God shield us! Listen!

CHORUS OF SPIRITS.

Woe if thou beholdest
Only evil there,
And on God's own breastplate
Gorgon-eyed despair.

(VIVIEN *drops* MERLIN'S *hand and leaves the room.*)

MERLIN (*looking after her*).

My poor Vivien!

ACT V.

THE TOMB

SCENE I.

By the Sea. Sunrise.

MERLIN (*adoring*).

ETERNAL fount of being, endless spring
Of forces that with mighty pulse out-thrown
Inform the vast of nature, thou alone
The one warm life in every living thing.
Thou soul of all things, all-uplifting wing
Of nature mounting to the topmost throne
Of evolution by dark ways unknown
Of birth and death, of bloom and withering.
Thou goal of all things, all-absorbing end;
As rivers to the ocean, so to thee
The streaming forces ever headlong tend

To lose them and be one again with thee.
To thee the generations awful bend,
And life and death adoring bow the knee.

A still small Voice.

I make and unmake and re-make
Pathetic forms that come and go,
That think they live because they ache,
And think they die because they flow
Back into that eternal sea
Where nought becomes, but all things be.

Mortal, what wouldst thou? Ask of me.

MERLIN.

Hast Thou not made me, Father, in Thy love,
Thy love to know and render unto Thee,
And laid in it a bliss like that above,
Foretaste and pledge of immortality?
Hast Thou the heart with sight of heaven to fill

My raptured eyes, and then to strike me blind?
To make me love Thee first, and then to kill,—
O that were cruelty!—and Thou art kind.
If thus it were, my love were more than Thine;
I would live ever to love only Thee.
Is it Thy pleasure I should e'er resign
What, Thee enriching nothing, beggars me?
I love Thee: tell me that I shall not die.
I love thee: let me love immortally.

The Voice.

Once have I spoke by lips that cannot lie:
He that believeth in me shall never die.

MERLIN.

I love Thee: 'tis enough: I cannot die.
I love Thee: that is immortality.

The Voice.

Lo I am Love; thy life is hid in me.

(*A great silence.*)

VIVIEN (*entering*).

He's at his prayers. 'Tis odd he always stands
So, bolt-upright and gazing into heaven
As he would fly into it like an eagle.
Now when I pray, I love to fold the hands
And bend the knee; how else should I myself
Know I was praying? Not that I love shams.
I hate the formal prayers I do not feel.
I wish my own wish be it good or bad,
And if it is not suitable to God,
I send it—otherwhere.—I wonder now
What Merlin has been praying for. I doubt
He wants me dead that he may marry Morgan.
Well, let him pray the thing he dare not do,
Till I have done the very thing I pray.
The parson says God ever aids the man
Who lives the thing he prays. Well, I live mine.
The thing I do I pray that it be done.
I ask not foolishly that he would alter
The way o' the world Himself hath so ordained.
I am content to play the world's own game

The world's own way, which to *my* sense at least
Is not amiss. But then comes ever in
This strange incalculable element
Of sovran chance, and maugre all our skill
Makes unforeseen event. This must be God,
Since human wit availeth not against it.
This then I pray to, that He favour me,
Or at the least stand by and let me be.—
Now must I steel my heart to strike a blow
Shall make me mistress of myself again
At any cost. 'Tis not to be endured
That he I looked to make so serviceable
Should prove a mere obstruction; till so far
'Tis gone, he has not a good quality
I do not hate; and even his defects,
Though more endurable, do not suffice
To cloak his odious virtues. Gratitude,
And truth, and honour, and reverence for the right
He calls it, when he calls my foe his friend,
And chides me that I flout her! You, my master,
Shall rue the day you thwarted Vivien!

But he has done his prayers. Now for the game.

(*She approaches him from behind.*)

How does my lord and master?

MERLIN.

Vivien!

You here!

VIVIEN.

Ah ha! you thought I did not know
Your secret haunts. You cannot so escape me.
You lie awake till I am fast asleep,—
At least you think so; you rise stealthily;
You think I do not know that you are gone——

MERLIN.

I did not want to break upon your rest
That am so restless.

VIVIEN.

'Tis an ill excuse
That apes a virtue.

MERLIN.

Nay, the best excuse
Is—not to need one.

VIVIEN.

Ah, you do not want it;
But I am quite determined you shall have it,—
I *will* forgive you.

MERLIN.

If in the true heart
Is sweet forgiveness, I am satisfied.

VIVIEN.

As it did not deceive me, I forgive you,
But upon one condition.

MERLIN.

What may that be?

VIVIEN.

Do you remember that you promised me
A while ago—yes, a long while ago—
We never should be parted?

MERLIN.

Such a promise
Is sacred, even when, ah me! like this one,
It cannot be performed.

VIVIEN.

Why not? I tell you,
You shall perform it, you shall make a tomb——

MERLIN.

A tomb!

VIVIEN.

A tomb. What would you have us lie in,
When we are dead?

MERLIN.

Your wishes go to mingle
Our dust when we are dead; my promise went
To mingle soul with soul, to have one will,
One heart, one life.

VIVIEN.

Of course I know you ought
To love and cherish me and cleave to me.
I take for granted all that sort of thing.

MERLIN.

What is it then you do not take for granted?

VIVIEN.

Well, I have set my heart upon a tomb,
Just wide enough for two—a magic tomb,
To ope and close at pleasure. Merlin, dear,
Do promise me to make one. 'Twill not be
Harder to do than all that magic garden

You made so cleverly. So now, my dear,——
What are you dreaming of? You do not hear me.

MERLIN.

Oh yes, I hear you. Only I was thinking
Of our first meeting by the magic well.
I went there all alone but yesterday;
The garden was all gone; not any trace
Of love's sweet glamour left. I sat me down
And thought, until my eyes were dim with tears;
When on a sudden through my tears I spied
A little flower that love's own hand might gather
And lay on love's own breast. See, here it is;
They call it: *Love lies bleeding.* Will you have it?

VIVIEN (*throwing it away*).

Certainly not. Now that is so like you,
To offer me a common little flower
With a foolish name. One really would think
You took me for a girl.

MERLIN.

What are you then?

VIVIEN.

A woman of the world, who knows right well
Nor man's nor woman's love lies long a-bleeding.
Love never made a wound love would not heal,
Though healing haply with another hand
Than gave the wound. Shall I apply the adage?
The lady Morgan has a fair white hand,
Fairer than mine, you think. Nay, let it go,
For you *do* think so. Say, mine wounded you,
Would hers be slow to heal?

MERLIN.

You know right well
The lady Morgan owes not any charm
To win my heart from you. And for your adage,
If true love ever gave true love a wound
Through hasty word or inconsiderate act,
He would not wait until an alien hand

Had healed the hurt, but instant wash the wound
In torrents of his own repentant tears,
And heal it with a kiss.

VIVIEN.

Well, kiss me then,
And heal the wound.

MERLIN.

I had not been aware
There was a wound to heal.

VIVIEN.

I do believe
You wanted to suggest the wound was yours.

MERLIN.

Not so. But after all, what matters it,
So we two kiss?

VIVIEN.

It matters everything.
There never was a more forgiving wife,
But one thing I will never tolerate,
I will not be forgiven.

MERLIN.

Well then, dear,
I won't forgive you.

VIVIEN.

For you must admit
There's nothing to forgive.

MERLIN.

Nay, such perfection
Were not to be forgiven! 'Tis enough
It is not wanted.

VIVIEN.

It is not indeed.

But an you love me, give me what I want.
You shall have no rest till I have my tomb.

MERLIN.

Is love so near death as to want a tomb?

VIVIEN.

You little know how we poor women love.
Many a time I wish that I were dead,
For then, I think, Merlin would love me more,
And miss my love if only it were gone.

MERLIN.

Love misses love the moment it is gone,
But waiteth not upon a selfish loss
To prick remembrance. He is lord of life,
Not death, and in the sacrifice of self
Hath his beatitude.

VIVIEN.

Well, sacrifice

Yourself for once, and give me what I want.
Then we shall both be happy; I shall have
My wish, and you have—your beatitude.

MERLIN.

Have then your wish.

VIVIEN (*embracing him*).

O what a love you are!

MERLIN (*shrinking*).

Nay, do not kiss me until it is done.

VIVIEN (*kissing him*).

But I must kiss you, for I am so happy.
How good of you! And when will it be done?
I do so long to see how you will look—
How *I* shall look, I mean—stretched out in it,
Just like a marble figure in a niche
In some old minster.

MERLIN.

Meet me here again
At sunset, 'twill be ready. For the present
Farewell! I will go pray.

VIVIEN.

Farewell! Farewell!

(*Exit* MERLIN.)

'Tis the wise man all over! Innocent
As any lamb! Were he a common fool,
I could not fool him so!—And yet he has
Such awful eyes, that seem to see me through
And yet to look beyond me. 'Tis uncanny
To have a mighty wizard for a lover,
And not a simple, hearty human fool
Like Guyomar. Heigho! Well, we shall see
What sunset and the tomb will do for me.

(*Exit.*)

SCENE II.

By the Western Sea. Sunset.

MERLIN (*alone*).

THE hour is come. The thing that I had dreamed
And dreaded, and yet hoped impossible,
Is here, inexorable; and at his touch
The stout realities of solid earth
Seem shadows, and the noisy life of men
A troubled dream. What if life be a dream,
And death the great awakening? O my soul,
If thou be true, thy dream of life doth bode
The self-same truth thy waking eyes shall see.
For truth is one, and one too the true soul
Whether it wake or sleep, nor feareth not

To look calm-eyed in the calm eyes of death.
Poor Vivien! What she fancies all unseen
I see it all, how she doth hunt my life,
And means to have it, cost her what it may.
Is there no way to save her from herself?
To part the resolutely guilty mind
From her own purpose? None. The chain that binds them
Hath adamantine links. She holds to pride,
And pride to hate, and hatred to revenge,
Whose stab is in the dark. Upon her bed
She lies awake and plans it; then, asleep
There at my side, enacts it in her dreams,
Murmuring, "He is dead! I am avenged!"
There is no help for her. Nor more for me
This side the grave. Were it any one but she
That dogged my life so, a single word—a wave
Of this light wand—would sweep them from my path;
But her I would save harmless with my life,—
Yea, to my life's defeat, so it were with honour.
And while she lives, she lives to the one end
That I may die. And she hath many an arrow

From my own quiver, many a secret art
Wormed from my fondness while I dreamed her true,
Helpful in mine, but in malicious hand
Most hurtful; one or other, winged with hate,
Is sure to hit. Then, O my soul, prepare
To face the destinies whose awful seat
Is curtained round with death. Farewell, green earth
And ever-freshening sea. Yon sinking sun,
Ere he have reached you, may see Merlin die.
How calm all nature! Pass, O blessed calm,
Into my soul. Am I not part of you—
Of this fair-ordered universal plan?
May not this life be severed less from that
Than day from day by soft-recurring sleep
And night? Or say I suffer some bright change,
As that poor grub there, prone upon a leaf,
Breaks from his self-spun tomb, that is a womb,
A winged imago, minion of the sun
And darling of the flowers, itself a flower.
Or say I pass into some lower form;—
Let death change what he may, he cannot change
My soul to false from true. And One remains

Amid the changing worlds unchangeable.
My God, my life is unto Thee. Thou canst
As well by her as any other hand
Take Merlin home.

VIVIEN (*entering*).

Ay, there he is,
And at his prayers again. 'Twill not avail him.
I too have prayed. Not that I trust to that.
I work incessantly; and highest God,
Though He approve not, gives set will his way.
The constant mind is her own destiny.
Chance never is persistent; I—persist.
But he perceives me.—Dearest, you are here
Before me. But I do not see the tomb.
Is it not ready yet?

MERLIN.

Ay, all is ready,—(*aside*)
The altar and the victim and the knife.

VIVIEN.

What are you muttering?

MERLIN.

See you this huge rock,
That fronts the great sea and the setting sun?
It is the tomb of Merlin. Were he dead,
'Twould open at the only name of Death
To take him in, and with the one word Peace!
Would close again.

VIVIEN.

But as you are not dead,
What words will ope and close it?

MERLIN.

Only one
Can ope the grave to love.

VIVIEN.

That word is——?

MERLIN.

Hate.

And only one can close it upon love.

VIVIEN.

And that is——?

MERLIN.

Treachery.

VIVIEN.

What horrid words!

It is so like you, dear, to go and choose

Words that no man of taste would ever use.

MERLIN.

'Tis not I chose them, but the awful powers

Whom I obey

VIVIEN.

Then the bad taste is theirs.
Would it not do to think it?

MERLIN.

'Twere enough
To think it of set purpose. (*The rock opens.*)
(*Aside.*) Lo, the thought
Hath oped the deadly chamber!

VIVIEN.

O how pretty!
I never thought it would be such a love!
Merlin, you really must lie down in it
And let me see you; you will look so grand
Lying alone there.
(*Lays her hand on it, and shrinks back.*)
Dear! how hard and cold!

MERLIN.

'Tis warm and soft to one who hath laid his head
Upon a loveless breast.

VIVIEN (*aside*).

Does he suspect?—
How narrow, too! There is not surely room
For both of us.

MERLIN.

If both were minded to,
Room were enough; but 'twas not meant for both,
My Vivien. Soon it will be all too wide
For him whose wishes but an hour ago
Did strike against the stars. (*Lies down in it.*)
Here Merlin lies.

VIVIEN (*aside*).

He does suspect. Quick, quick, ere he do rouse him
From his dejection! Close, thou fatal casket,
Upon thy jewel. (*The rock closes.*)

Now, Morgan, do thy worst!
Rescue thy lover! Try each subtle art
He taught thee! Which of them shall ope the vast
And massy doors of death?

MERLIN (*from within*).

My Vivien!

VIVIEN.

He speaks! O horrible! he calls me his!

MERLIN.

Farewell, my Vivien! With my latest breath
I do forgive thee. Vivien, fare thee well!

VIVIEN (*listening*).

He's dead! No, no, he lives! I heard him gasp.
O Hell! which horror is to me the greater,
That he should die or live? Now all his acts,
That were all kind, accusing angels stand
Betwixt me and my purpose. Shall I yield?

No, no ; to yield's to fail. Vivien—to fail !
Never ! no yielding !—O what a cry was there
Of a heart breaking !—What if he does not die,
But live confined, a lamentable ghost
Crying for exit ? and the shuddering air
Babble the secret, and a rumour spread,
Till Morgan hear of it, and once again
Rescue her lover ? O if I thought that,
I'd ope the rock and hold him by the throat
Till he was dead. No, no, no, no, not that !
He'd look, I know it, as though he loved me still.
Is no way out but to go deeper in ?
O that it only were all as before,
And he were mine again, and I were glad !
Are you alive, Merlin ? You are not dead,
You shall not die yet. Ope, thou deadly trap,
Give back thy victim !

(*The rock opens : she bends over him.*)

Merlin, speak to me,
My Merlin !—Thou wast ever wont to smile,
If I but called thee mine.—O he is dead !
Quite dead ! he cannot help nor hinder me,

Nor vex me any more. Poor Merlin! now
I do forgive him. (*Draws herself up.*)
Stay, did not he say
That he forgave me? me, to whom he owed
Amends, whose right it was to have forgiven!
No, I will not forgive him! One there lives
Whom he preferred in honour. Nevermore
Will I relent, while any one remains
Happy, who wronged me or taxed me with wrong.
I am but half avenged.—Yet,—for he did
Most absolutely love me; and I too,—well,
I too had loved him, had he been content
To hate where I hate, and love only me;
But he forsooth must heal with amity
Whom I had spurned—nay, and be very wroth
At my most natural scorn;—I hate him still,
And think it very shame I came so near
Quite to forgive him. Yet—he loved me well;
And he is gone; and there is no one left
To love me like my Merlin.—Merlin, see,
I do forgive thee, take again thy hand
In mine,—it is not cold yet, something lives

Of thy old ardour; I will warm it here,
Here in my bosom, where it loved to rest
When thou wouldst call me thine, thy Vivien,
And kiss me even as I kiss thee now.

(*Clasps him groaning.*)

Merlin! O Merlin! Merlin! Oh!—Oh!—Oh!

(*Starts up, and glances fearfully round.*)

I must not leave him so. Morgan might find him,
Kiss him perchance, and rumour it about,
And men might call it murder. Therefore close,
Horrible rock, keep in thy breast thy secret!

(*The rock closes. She stands gazing awhile, then turns away shuddering.*)

Merlin, thy spirit passeth into light,
While Vivien goes alone into the night. (*Exit.*)

CHORUS OF SPIRITS (*unseen*).

SEMI-CHORUS I.

Lay off the cerements that cling to the mortal,
Garment thou needest none, child of the day;
Sun-bright thy spirit hath passed the dark portal,
Wings of the morning thine only array.

SEMI-CHORUS II.

From all earthly passion purgèd clear,
Enter thou the everlasting age ;
Heavenly now the vision of the seer,
Happy now the wisdom of the sage.

SEMI-CHORUS I.

O'er the death and birth
Of the painful earth,
That beneath thee lie,
Night deeper sinks,

SEMI-CHORUS II.

And the lucent brinks
Of the morn are nigh,
Where the soul hath the gain
Of her fiery pain ;

CHORUS.

Glory to God Most High !

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